

COURTING UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

BY P. DELACY.

OLD HANS TURNER and his neighbor Jones, had fallen out about a piece of land, and the result was a law-suit, which had made them such enemies that they would not speak to each other, or allow their families to hold any intercourse.

Hans had a daughter Kate, who was about eighteen years of age, and who John Jones, the oldest son in the Jones family, thought just the prettiest girl in all creation. At the time the family troubles began, he was paying attention to Kate, but then the old man forbid him the house, and threatened Kate with dire vengeance if she even spoke to him again. But love was not to be conquered in any such manner, and in fact the opposition only seemed to fan the flames the brighter. The result was that John and Kate managed to meet quite often.

It so happened, that on one evening the whole family, except Kate, went away to some merry-making, to be gone until quite late, when John, as in duty bound, came over—accidentally of course—to keep Kate from getting lonesome, and help her to pass the evening pleasantly.

That he succeeded admirably, we may judge, from the fact that before either of the lovers thought it late, the carriage bringing home the family, arrived, and the old man's voice was heard approaching the door.

Kate was terribly afraid of her father's anger, and for a moment, there seemed to be no way except to face him and brave it; but a woman is generally ready for an emergency, and Kate was a woman.

Hans and his wife slept in the sitting-room, having a bed so fixed that during the day about two-thirds of its length turned up against the wall, where with a curtain drawn around it, was but little in the way.

Kate also knew that her parents invariably visited the pantry for a bite, just before retiring for the night, and so without any more hesitation she directed John to creep under the head of the bed, telling him to slip out quietly while they were eating their evening lunch. To please Kate, John would have done much more than that, so he did as she told him, with as little delay as possible. He had hardly reached his hiding place before the old folks accompanied by the boys, entered the room. After a few moments of conversation, the boys and Kate went to their rooms, leaving Hans and his wife as they supposed, in full possession of the premises.

Mrs. Hans soon proceeded to turn down the bed and prepare it for the night, when John from his place under the bed, congratulated himself upon soon having a chance to leave; but whether the good cheer furnished at the party where they had been, took away their usual appetite or not, is not known, but to John's horror they at once prepared for bed, not giving him the expected opportunity for escape.

He thought, however, that he might by keeping still until they were asleep, yet get away without old Hans hearing him, and perhaps might have done it, had he not been troubled with a cold. John had not long been under the bed until he felt a strong inclination to cough, which he managed to restrain for a time, but at last, before the old folks could possibly be asleep, in spite of all he could do, a sort of grunt escaped him. It was a curious sound and perhaps might have frightened even braver people than Hans Turner, and his wife.

Every man has some weakness, and old Turner's weak point was a firm belief in ghosts and goblins, and consequently he at once gave the credit of the singular sound to some supernatural cause. His hair bristled with terror and he hardly had strength to whisper to his worthy partner, to know if she had heard the noise. Yes! she too had heard it, and was fully as badly scared.

While they lay in such fear in the bed, John was in still greater trouble under the bed. The constant tickling in his throat, and the fear of being discovered if he gave way to it, put him in perfect misery. At last he could restrain it no longer and in the attempt to keep it back, he succeeded in making a noise that was a groan, a cough and grunt so mingled, that it was enough to scare any one. Old Hans could not hold out against any noise so terrible, and making a leap he landed in the middle of the room, saying: "Save yourself, mother! The devil or some of his imps is under the bed," he made speed to reach the room occupied by the boys, hastily followed by his

other half, who, in this case was no better than he.

The boys were quickly aroused, and made acquainted with the cause of the commotion. With the striking of the light came renewed courage, and with the boys for a body-guard—the old folks returned to reconnoitre the premises.

Upon entering the room the old man at a safe distance, holding the light, made one of the boys raise the curtain and look under the bed. Of course nothing was there, for the moment the way was left clear John had made haste to get away from the house and was then quite a distance on his way home.

By this time Kate had joined the party anxious to learn if her lover had escaped, and as looking under the bed had failed to explain the mystery, she suggested that they examine the cellar. Accordingly the whole force moved cautiously down to that locality, but there, search was equally unsuccessful, and the old man returned in the full belief that some supernatural visitor had made the terrible sounds.

The boys and Kate tried to convince him to the contrary, but all to no effect, and he solemnly said: "Children, some one is going to die and this is a warning: you may laugh now, but if in the morning you should find either me or the old woman dead, then you would believe it too." But at last they again retired, but this time the candle was left burning, as Hans said, "so he could see if anything did happen."

As time passed on and neither him or the old woman were called away, his fears subsided, but for nearly a year he used to tell the story every time he could get a listener, and would have told it longer of if the truth had not come out.

Not many months however, after that terrible night, the trouble between the two families was settled, and then John and Kate with her father's consent, emigrated to the State of Matrimony.

At the wedding, as the old man was relating "his ghost story," as he called it, to quite an audience, Kate took the scare all out of it by telling the exact cause of the noise.

The laugh that followed Kate's version of the story, was not joined in by old Hans, and he was even heard to mutter something like,

"I wish I had known it before I gave my consent to the marriage," and in which case, it is highly probable that John would have waited some longer before marrying Kate with her father's approval. As it could not be helped now, the old man soon learned to look upon it as a joke, and fully forgave both John and Kate.

Scene in a Justice's Court.

Dramatis Personæ—Lawyer, who is fond of his "tod"; Witness, likewise with a weakness; the Court; and opposing legal lights and spectators.

Lawyer to witness—

"Did you drink any thing at the bar of the defendant?"

"Once."

"Any more?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, how many more?" emphatically.

"Perhaps twice or three times."

"Did you, sir, drink ten times?"

"I don't know, may be I did."

"Well, sir, how did you feel after the first drink?" Witness muses awhile—

"I felt like a sunflower."

"Ah, you did sir. How did you feel after the second drink?"

Witness, smiling blandly—"I—I felt like two sunflowers!"

More laughter, and lawyer slightly irritated.

"Now, sir,"—with great gravity of look—after ten drinks how did you feel?"

Witness to lawyer—"Square, you have been there, you know, pretty often, and understand language is not equal to the occasion. Really, you must excuse me."

"Silence in the Court!" thunders the justice, and of course he was obeyed—in a horn.

A peddler in Connecticut sold his dog to a stranger for eight dollars, and lent him a piece of safety fuse to lead the animal home by. By the bribe of a dollar a boy was induced to fire the fuse, the dog returned to his old master, and the peddler netted seven dollars on his trade.

"What is Europe compared to America?" said a Fourth of July orator. "Nowhere! Where is England? Nowhere! They call England the mistress of the sea, but what makes the sea? The Mississippi makes it, and all we've got to do is to turn the Mississippi into the Mammoth Cave, and the English navy will be floundering in the mud!"

AN UNWELCOME GUEST.

BY JUDGE CLARK.

TO GET money and keep it, according to Richard Whinstone's catechism, were the two chief ends of man.

He was a single man on principle. It was the right thing economically, and therefore right indubitably.

To one person in the world Richard Whinstone was generous, and that was his dear friend—Richard Whinstone.

Richard Whinstone had done a good day's work. He had made one or two profitable shaves; he had sold up the widow Marten, and turned her and her six children out of doors for non-payment of rent; and, finally, had read a little boy with a pinched and pitiful face, who had besought the price of a loaf of bread, and who said he had a sick mother at home, a lecture on the sinfulness of begging, that evidently touched the little wretch's conscience, for he turned aside and wept bitterly.

"You're a good citizen, Dick," he said, as he sat down to dinner, "and deserve to be rewarded."

The dinner was one after his own heart. It was a treat he had promised himself if things were right, and they had gone right.

He ate, drank, and was merry. If his appetite lost its edge, the bottle of Burgundy was there to whet it, and fell to again, till the last morsel, like Macbeth's amen, stuck in his throat.

Satiety normally begets placidity. The lion, the leopard, and the lamb, might lie down together any day, with perfect safety to the latter—provided the two former had their bellies full. The bon constrictor, gorged with an ox, betakes himself, for a season, to a life of quiet. But the effect on Richard Whinstone was different. The expense of a whole pig, wallowing in wine, rested heavy on his conscience, and brain began to busy itself with schemes of reimbursement.

The current of his thoughts was interrupted by a loud knock. Who could be coming on business at that hour? Some one, perhaps, with a bill of discount in an emergency that would bear no waiting. So much the better, and he hastened to open the door.

"How are you, Dick?" the stranger greeted him, with a familiarity altogether too careless for a needy customer.

"I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, sir," said Richard, in a tone more freezing than polite.

"But I know you very well," returned the stranger; "and pray don't let us stand here bandying ceremonies, for it's confounded chilly," saying which he led the way to the apartment Richard had just quitted.

"Well, this is comfort," he continued, rubbing his hands before the fire. "I had it felt so much at home since I left there."

A hasty survey of his visitor added alarm to Richard's astonishment. He was a wiry, ill-looking little man, in a rusty suit of black, with a wicked leer on his face, and one club foot.

"I say Dick," the little man resumed, holding his hands in the blaze as if they were fire-proof, "what an inhospitable dog you are?"

"Whether hospitable or inhospitable," growled Richard, losing his temper as he gained his courage, "is not your business, but I would like to know what is."

"It's bad talking business on an empty stomach."

"I don't see how it's to be helped," answered Dick, doggedly.

"Don't see how it's to be helped, you curmudgeon!" thundered the little man, fiercely. "With the remains of such a feast on the table, there must be more where it came from."

"Upon my word," replied Richard meekly, for he was getting frightened again, "there isn't a bite in the house."

"Don't lie!" roared the other; "there is a cold ham in the pantry, and a demi-john of brandy in the closet."

"How do you know that?" it was on the tip of Richard's tongue to ask, but he was too much amazed to speak.

"How did I know it?" broke in the stranger, as if reading his thoughts;—"Why, I smell them; so bring them out."

Richard would have demurred, but his guest made a movement which convinced him delay might be dangerous, and the required articles were produced.

Without changing his seat, the little man drew up to the table and began to eat. And how he did eat! A chunk of ham, big enough for a shark bait, was stuck on the point of the carving knife, and thrust down his throat with the au-

dacity of a sword-swallower. Another and another followed, till nothing remained but the bone, which he crushed with his teeth, and then sucked the marrow.

"Now for a punch!" he cried.

"There is no hot water," Richard ventured to say.

"Water! who asked for water?—bring me a lemon, some sugar, and a kettle."

The kettle was placed on the fire. The stranger filled it with brandy, adding lemon and sugar to suit his taste. As the liquor boiled over it caught fire, setting the whole in a blaze.

Richard jumped up to take it off. The stranger caught his arm, and flung him back as if he had been a child instead of a substantial citizen of two hundred pounds.

"What are you about?" he exclaimed; "the punch is doing well enough."

"I was only afraid the house might be burnt."

"Bother the house!" replied the little man; "there's no danger."

"Your health, Dick," at length he said, and raising the kettle all blazing to his lips, he drank like a dromedary.

"And now, Dick, it's your turn," he said after a long breath; "you must drink my health now."

Richard drew back.

"Drink!" shouted the stranger, holding out the vessel.

Poor Dick took a single gulp. He left the skin of his mouth on the brim of the kettle, his throat was singed by the blaze.

"And now to business said the stranger, resuming his seat, leaving Dick to sit or stand as he chose.

"You knew John Walter, I believe."

"Yes—yes," stammered Richard, "I once knew a person of that name."

"You and he went to California together."

Richard acknowledged the fact.

"You made money, and he didn't."

"I believe I was the more fortunate of the two."

"You and he started to return together, and he died at San Francisco."

Richard bowed.

"His wife and child are now destitute," the stranger persisted.

"I can't help that."

"Of course not. It was his boy you gave the good advice to-day; I hope the young scamp will profit by it."

The scene with the little beggar, Richard was quite sure had been witnessed by no one. How the stranger found it out was past comprehension.

"You're quite sure John Walter died poor?" the stranger went on.

"Oh! quite," said Richard, "I paid his funeral expenses myself."

"That's a lie!" retorted the little man; "They were paid by the public."

It's another lie that he died poor. He had twenty thousand dollars with him when he stole."

"I deny it!" Richard fairly screamed, "and defy you to prove it."

"Prove it! What effrontery! Why I saw you do it."

"It is false! There was nobody present."

"Be careful, Richard, or you will commit yourself. I saw you do another thing."

Dick shrank shivering in a chair, but said nothing.

"John Walter would have survived his illness, but you put poison in his medicine."

A sudden fury took possession of Richard Winston when he saw the secret of his life in another's keeping. The carving knife lay within his reach. He seized it, and springing on the stranger, with a desperate plunge sought to bury the blade in his heart, but it glanced as from plate armor, and in an instant the little man was on his feet.

"Oho, that's your game is it?"

And with a trip that sent his heels spinning in the air, Richard was thrown headlong with a force that shook the house to its foundation. The club foot was placed on his stomach and what a horrible ugly foot it was! It was cleft like the hoof of an ox and seemed to weigh a ton.

"Then you are the—"

"Pray keep a civil tongue in your head, and come along," said the little man.

Richard fainted.

When he came to himself day was breaking. The old house-keeper, who had found him groaning and sprawling on the floor, had, with much difficulty, shaken him into consciousness. She assisted him to bed. But Richard never was himself again. The surfeit of pig had brought on a fever, of which he died in eight days. His last rational act was the execution of

a will, by which he left the bulk of his fortune to John Walter's widow and child; which, after all, was a simple act of justice, for the Demon Nightmare had told the truth.

The Dutchman's Experience.

At a circus, recently, five dollars was offered to any one who would ride the mule three times around the ring without falling off. A Dutchman present concluded to try it and related his experience as follows:

I got on his pack mitout sum droubles, and der furd dime I got around dat ring splendif; on der second dime it ish a driffe more harter for me to holt on mit mineself, for dat mule pegins to got nervous, and I shust ish out on mine third rount, und vas dinkin dat der fifth toller ish mine, ven dat pigger shackass mule makes a rare ub, und ub I goes in der air, vich make me durn doo or dreee summersets, und town I lanted in der middle of dat ring. I dinks every pone in mine pody is proked, so I dries so I can hurry outer dat ring, for I ish afraid of mine life; ven I dry to done distings, dat mule shackass up mit his pehint legs and gave on mine pack pehind, such a kick, as I ish knocked more as six yarts outer dat ring; so I ton't get der finif tollars. I ish now made ub mit mine mind dat any peobles vot dries to vin monish mit mule ridin, ish a more pigger shackass as der mule. Aint it?

A pertinent text was recently preached by a young clergyman near Boston, who returning to his parish after a month's vacation, brought with him a companion for life. It was of course a surprise and the subject of many remarks. Every body naturally wished to see the pastor's wife, and next Sunday the church was crowded. The attention of the congregation seemed turned more to the bride than to the service, until they were startled by the announcement of the text, "What went ye out for to see?" It seemed to meet the case. Thenceforth they looked upon the minister.

Returning from divine service one Sunday, good little Billy—his idea of propriety had been shocked by the wonderful attire of some little female friends, who displayed uncommonly low-necked dresses, which moved him to say unto his maternal parent: "It's poor business for folks to go to church just to show their clothes." "Why, my son, you must not judge those little girls; we cannot see their hearts." "Can't see their hearts!" exclaimed Billy; "well I should think you might; their dresses were low enough, I'm sure!"

The celebrated Dr. Thynne—celebrated almost as much for his love of good living as for his professional skill—called one day upon a certain eccentric nobleman, whom he found sitting alone at a very nice dinner. After some time the doctor receiving no invitation to partake of it said; "My dear lord, if I were in your lordship's place, I should say, 'Pray doctor, do as I am doing.'" "A thousand pardons for the omission," cried his lordship; "pray, then, my dear doctor, do as I am doing—go home and eat your own dinner."

Judge Hugh Breckenridge, of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, the witty author of "Modern Chivalry," whilst riding through Westmoreland Co., Pa., saw a young girl who was going out to milk the cows, place her hand on the top rail of a fence, and spring over. "If you can do that again, my girl, I will marry you." The girl did so. The Judge dismounted, saw the parents of the girl, and told them that he would undertake the education of their daughter and afterwards marry her; which was done.

The celebrated Dr. Gregory, in the course of one of his medical lectures at Edinburgh, stated: "One cannot stand perfectly motionless for half an hour; that he had once tried to do so, and fainted at the end of twenty minutes. The blood requiring the aid of motion from the body in order to retain its full circulating power."

Discussion of the Bible questions in Cincinnati has led one of the writers of the Cincinnati Commercial to examine the book. After describing briefly, he comes to the conclusion that "Indeed the Bible is a good book to read."

A young farmer who inquired how best to start a nursery was told to get married.